

Brazil's Jiu-Jitsu Becomes Required Course in the Emirates

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Children between the ages of 10 and 14 in 12 public schools in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, should have jiu-jitsu classes twice a week starting in December 2008. For this purpose, the local government has hired 12 Brazilians to teach the martial art to the students.

"The objective is to make jiu-jitsu into a compulsory sport in the school curriculum of the Emirates," stated trainer Carlos Santos, also known as Carlão, who established a partnership with sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, prince of Abu Dhabi.

Carlão, who is a black belt and three times jiu-jitsu world champion, has been living in the Emirates for seven years teaching and spreading the sport in the country. Since his move to the Middle East, the trainer has already taken five teachers to the Emirates and organized the first national jiu-jitsu championship in the country, in 2004.

Last year, the Brazilian also organized Emirates Asian Super Cup Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, in Abu Dhabi, bringing together 145 athletes from 20 countries, and athletes from the Emirates won four gold medals, three silvers and seven bronzes.

"The sheikh liked the result very much and decided to start investing more in the sport," said Carlão, who has been working with sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and his sons for three years. According to Carlão, the project in the schools, School-Jitsu, is going to take jiu-jitsu and personal defense lessons to 3,600 children.

"There will be 50-minute practice sessions in each lesson," he said. Apart from practical lessons, the students should also have theoretical instruction about the sport.

According to Carlão, the children should also end up learning a little Portuguese, as the names of the moves are in Portuguese. "The project is going to generate strong ties between Brazil and the Emirates," he said.

According to the trainer, the project should be extended to girls next year, as the practice sessions must be separated by gender. "Sheikh Mohammed asked me to take three female black belts," he said.

The two-year contract signed between Carlão and the 12 teachers teaching in the Emirates includes a health plan for the whole family and a good salary, according to him.

The new teachers are Adriano Ornellas, Paulo Ricardo "Paulito", Uira Sul, Ricardo Neira, Marcinho Lívio, Bernardo Cruz, Marcelo da Silva, Julio Cesar Gomes, Pedro Lott, Mohammad Jehad, Tiago Fernandes and Leandro Polônio.

Carlão estimates that around one thousand people currently take jiu-jitsu classes in the Emirates. "The sport is growing very much in the Emirates," said the trainer who teaches at Abu Dhabi Combat Club. In September, for the first time, jiu-jitsu should be included in the Ramadan Championship, in Abu Dhabi, which includes 20 different sports.

"The government of Abu Dhabi is working to make the city into the capital of sport," said Carlão. In December, the capital of the Emirates should host the world jiu-jitsu championship, the Asian Super Cup Jiu-Jitsu.

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